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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to improve an elementary school library's resources by making them more balanced in terms of portraying the diversity that exists in society: specifically the need to portray characters of different gender and diverse ethnic backgrounds in positive roles. The topics covered in this report are: (1) introduction, which includes a description of the community and the work setting and role of the researcher; (2) study of the problem which includes the problem description, problem documentation, causative analysis, and relationship of the problem to the literature; (3) anticipated outcomes and evaluation instruments; (4) solution strategy, which includes discussion and evaluation of solutions, description of selected solution, and report of action taken; and (5) results, discussion, and recommendations. Included in the appendices are: a Florida Department of Education, Office of Educational Opportunity Checklist for evaluating textbooks; a teacher reading interest questionnaire; and a student book report questionnaire. (Contains 13 references.) (JLB)

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ED 365 317

Improving Library Resources in an Elementary Media Center by Assuring Greater Ethnic and Gender Diversity

by

Donna M. Saykanic

Cluster 48

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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May 26, 1993
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This practicum report was submitted by Donna M Saykacic under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Aug. 8, 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

William Anderson, Ed.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Improving Library Resources in an Elementary Media Center by Assuring Greater Ethnic and Gender Diversity. Saykanic, Donna M., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Media Center/ Library/ Elementary School/ Children's Literature/ Ethnic Groups/ Cultural Diversity/ Sexism in Children's Literature/ Sex-role Stereotypes/ Cultural Literacy/ Bias/ Reading Materials/ Book Reviews/ Library Material Selection/ Sex Discrimination.

The practicum was designed to improve the current library resources by making them more balanced in terms of portraying the diversity that exists in our society: specifically the need to portray characters of different gender and diverse ethnic backgrounds in positive roles. There was a need for careful selection of children's reading material to create a balanced collection of books portraying diverse ethnic characters in positive roles.

The writer provided an in-service training workshop that alerted staff members to possible biased reading resources; established a committee to evaluate library books and materials that were in use; obtained a $6,000.00 state grant which was utilized for the purchase of new library books and non-print materials; conducted two fundraising "Book Fairs"; co-chaired a "Multicultural Festival"; gave "Booktalks" to teachers and students; and the outcome of the practicum was evaluated through an analysis of the number of women and minority group members depicted in the 30 books most recently checked out of the library by two sixth grade classes.

Sex and racial bias was avoided in the selection of new reading materials for the library obtained from the proceeds of the state grant and "Book Fairs." The library collection of books and non-print materials was upgraded by providing a balance in the portrayal of diverse characters (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds.) The outcome analysis of the 30 most recently checked out books indicated substantial increases in the proportions of female and minority characters depicted in cover illustrations and illustrations within the books. Minority group members were also more frequently depicted as the main focus of illustrations in these books. Moreover, female and minority group characters were more often portrayed positively in these books. They were more likely to be described as intelligent, sensitive, and brave, and they were portrayed in a broad variety of positive roles. These findings make it clear that the practicum project did improve the media center so as to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student body.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The population of the community is approximately 54,000. It is an industrial and residential community in the northern region of the state.

The school district includes eleven schools, one high school, one middle school, and nine elementary schools. The school district employs 700 teachers. The total student population is 8,400. The average dollar amount of educating one child in this district is $4,571.00. This figure does not include the cost of transportation. The school district has an operating budget of $57,674,994.00 and receives an estimated $15,820,000.00 in additional state aid.

The students come from a lower middle class socioeconomic background with the following ethnic distribution: (a) 63% Hispanic, (b) 23% Black, (c) 7% White, and (d) 7% Asian. (28.1% of the students have limited English language skills).

The work setting is a library media center in an urban elementary school with a student population of 1,200.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is the library educational media specialist responsible for the entire student population (55 classes) who must implement the goals of an effective library media program of excellence.

The writer has been employed with the school district for five years and prior to this, was an elementary school teacher for ten years.

As the library media specialist, the writer is involved in the evaluation of textbooks, library books, and educational materials.

There is a great need for careful selection of children's reading material as well as non-print (audio-visual aids) today. The writer can make a difference with her input in the selection of reading material for the students in the school and throughout the district. The writer is in charge of ordering library books as well as audio-visual aids for the school's collection.

The writer is responsible for implementing the school district's library media program to 55 classes in grades kindergarten through six, including six special education classes. The classes come to the library once every two weeks for forty minutes. The

teachers do not stay because this is their "prep" time in which they prepare for their student's instruction.

The school library media program supports instruction in all areas of the curriculum and as the library media specialist, the writer must provide for specific instruction in library media skills. The school library media program reflects the philosophy of the school and enriches all parts of its educational program.

To be effective, the school library media program must contribute to today's educational goals. The objectives of the writer's library program reflect the philosophy and goals of the school district.

The library media center contains 10,000 book titles. There is a large collection of non-print educational media materials that include the following: (a) study prints, (b) posters, (c) filmstrips, (d) cassettes, (e) videos, (f) records, (g) color slides, (h) films, and (i) transparencies.

The audio-visual equipment includes the following: (a) T.V.V.C.R., (b) tape recorder, (c) record player, (d) overhead projector, (e) slide projector, (f) filmstrip projector, and (g) movie projector.

The library media program provides the students with a large and varied collection of materials that

are utilized to enrich and vitalize the curriculum. It enhances and offers guidance in the reading program by developing library skills and habits that contribute to the personal growth and development of the students.

The writer utilizes a large variety of materials and media to instruct the students in needed library skills. The writer implements enriching and stimulating lessons to the 55 classes that are instructed. The writer provides an excellent background in teaching library skills that will help pave the way for students' success in higher education.

Instruction in library skills is an area of special emphasis in the school library media program. The program of instruction in library skills must be coordinated with student use of the media center in subject areas throughout the curriculum.

The writer utilizes the district's "Library Skills K-12 Curriculum Guide" in the library media program. However, the writer has enhanced the library media program by bringing her own educational philosophy, goals, and objectives into the program.

The writer's two main objectives of the library media program are the following: (a) to provide materials and assistance that support learning, and (b) to offer instruction in library media skills. The

school library media program supports instruction in all areas of the curriculum.

The following is a breakdown of library skills that the writer teaches in the library media center:

1. Use of the library media center. Orientation to the library would include the following: (a) manners, (b) library rules, (c) general information on use, and (d) circulation procedures.

2. The care of books and materials. Students learn the proper care of the following: (a) print materials, (b) non-print materials, (c) use of materials, and (d) returning materials and books on time.

3. Arrangement of materials. Students learn the arrangement of the following: (a) fiction, (b) non-fiction, (c) reference, (d) location of Dewey Decimal categories, (e) location of periodicals, and (f) location of audio-visual materials and equipment.

4. Card Catalog. Students learn the following: (a) index to collections, (b) how to find a book with a particular author, title, or subject emphasis, (c) card filing techniques, (d) explain the "see" and "see also" references, and the differences between them, (e) locate and identify the various parts, and (f) locate any book organized by the Dewey Decimal system on its appropriate shelf.

5. Dewey Decimal System. Students learn the following: (a) ten major categories, (b) function of the decimal point, (c) cutter or author letters.

6. Reference Collection. Students learn the following: (a) name and describe the function of three different types of dictionaries, (b) describe the function of the encyclopedia, (c) identify three special encyclopedias, (d) describe the function of an almanac, (e) describe the function of an atlas, (f) describe the function of biographical reference tools, (g) name three items which may be found in special reference indexes, and (h) identify and explain the functions of the various parts of a Reader's Guide entry.

7. Parts of books and media materials. Students learn to identify the following: (a) title page, (b) copyright date, (c) table of contents, (d) in-book index, (e) preface, (f) appendix, (g) illustrations, (h) bibliography, (i) footnotes, and (j) use of guide with media materials.

8. Listening skills. Students develop good listening skills through the library media center instruction and use of materials.

The school library media center is a laboratory for learning library research skills to be applied to information needs throughout students' lives. The most

effective learning takes place through the actual use of materials and equipment within the media center.

The continuity of the library media program provides for the student a cumulative growth in library skills, and in the development of reading, listening, and viewing abilities and tastes.

The writer is also responsible for purchase orders; processing new library books, including cataloging; processing library books that are returned; shelving; audio-visual equipment; library material; and library maintenance.

School library experiences serve as steppingstones to the use of other library resources in the community and to the formation of a lifetime habit of library usage, as well as pride in the ownership of books. Early and enjoyable library experience is the best insurance for lifetime library use.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There was a need to improve the current library resources by making them more balanced in terms of portraying the diversity that exists in our society: specifically the need to portray characters of different gender and diverse ethnic backgrounds in positive roles.

Students should have access to materials representative of various ethnic and cultural groups, and their contribution to our American heritage.

There was a need for careful selection of children's reading material to create a balanced collection of books portraying diverse ethnic characters in positive roles.

Students should develop an understanding and appreciation of peoples of the world and their cultures. Self-esteem and self-concept are enhanced when students utilize library materials successfully to meet their needs. The resources contribute to their cultural development. There is a great diversity of cultural background among American schoolchildren.

The problem was an insufficient number in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds).

Problem Documentation

The writer selected 30 of the most recently checked out books from the school library and evaluated them using the criteria from the State Department of Education Office of Equal Educational Opportunity Checklist for Evaluating Textbooks for gender-fair and ethnic-fair materials.

The following was the actual evidence to support the existence of the problem:

1. Cover illustrations were 90% male and 10% female. Minority males depicted were 1 Asian Indian and 1 Native American.

2. 63% of the illustrations depicted males, (4% of which were minority).

3. The main focus in illustrations was males 75% of the time, with minority males, 1%; females, 25% of the time with 5% minorities.

4. Depicted children included 75% males and 25% females, all white.

5. Older children depicted were 90% male and 10% female, all white.

6. Adults depicted were 65% male, of which 7% of the total were minority, and 35% female, of which 10% of the total were minority.

7. Adults depicted as parents were 40% male and 60% female, all white.

8. Characters depicted as crying, frightened, or passive were 35% male, of which 10% of the total were minority, and 65% female.

9. Characters depicted as angry, adventurous, or active were 80% male with 3% of the total minority, and 20% female, all white.

10. Characters depicted as stupid, selfish, or the butt of a joke all male, half white and half minority.

11. There were four demeaned characters, two males, two females, two whites, and two minorities.

12. 75% of all activities or occupations were allocated to men, of which 3% of the total was for minority men, and 25% were for women.

13. 65% of the main character children were male, and 2% of those were minority (Mowgli); 35% were female, all white.

14. 90% of adult main characters were male, with 7% of those minority; 10% were female, all white.

15. In adventure stories, 75% of the main characters were male (8% minority), and 25% female, all white.

16. Characters depicted as timid or frightened were 30% male-- all minority (!), and 70% female, all white.

17. Characters who were dependent on others were 10% male, all white and 90% female, all white.

18. Independent characters were 50% male and 50% female, all white.

19. Intelligent or active characters included 82% males (5% minority) and 18% females (1% minority).

20. Characters making decisions were 80% male (5% minority) and 20% female (1% minority).

21. Adults depicted in a parental role included 40% white males and 60% white females.

22. Nasty/unkind characters or enemies of the main character included 85% males, or which 51% were minorities; and 15% females.

23. Demeaned characters were all male, 50% white, 50% minority.

24. Depicted occupations included 75% males (1% minority--George Washington Carver); and 25% female.

25. In all of the books reviewed, Hispanics appeared only once, as enemies of Davy Crockett at the Alamo. Black women were prominent in only one other book, one on military careers for women. Of the books, the most racist and sexist were Tom Swift novels, where women and girls were nearly entirely absent and where minorities appeared, they were depicted as aliens or savages.

Where females were most visibly depicted were in books directed primarily at girls, such as Nancy Drew mysteries, women's careers, or feminine self-help books. Even then, the careers depicted were primarily

of the clerical, "pink collar," or traditional feminine jobs as nurse or teacher. One book on careers in beauty (hairstylists, fashion designers, and beauticians) featured predominantly males in the text and pictures. Two self-help books featured such topics as how to make the best of your appearance, become popular, attract boys, and so forth. Although girls were featured in many non-domestic activities, women were more often featured in their roles as homemakers. Females were more likely than males to be characterized as scared, timid, and dependent. Somehow the female animal characters tend to have derogatory names such as "Goofy Mrs. Goose" or the "Cannibal Woman".

Minorities were conspicuous in their absence, especially females. When present, they were more likely than whites to be characterized negatively. The racial stereotyping in some cases was appalling. They were most often cast into roles of enemies of the protagonists. Many times minorities were portrayed as members of preliterate societies in conflict with literate whites.

A 1990 report by the state monitoring review team concluded that library media resources were out-of-date and insufficient in the school system. Many parents, community members and pupils voiced great concern in this area.

The state monitoring review team's recommendations were that the district should upgrade the holdings, technology, and services offered by the school libraries. Other recommendations were that materials selected should reflect the multicultural and multilingual population of the district.

The school libraries were not serving as media centers with appropriate modern technology. The lack of library services was of great concern to the parents because city library services were being reduced due to funding problems.

Causative Analysis

There was a lack of attention by previous librarians in selecting library materials representative of various ethnic and cultural groups, and their contribution to our American heritage. The selection of library materials did not meet the needs of the ethnically diverse population of students that utilized the library daily. Students should select materials from a well-rounded multi-media collection which has been developed with consideration for student interest, ability level, and need to cope with an ever increasing body of knowledge.

All library materials ordered by previous librarians were not well-rounded and balanced. There was complacency over reading fare by previous librarians.

Publishers in the United States during the past 20 years have been accused of inequities in their treatment of the sexes and races. The best children's books published each year (those receiving the Caldecott Medal, Newberry Award, and Honor Award) have been found to be dominated by males. As a group, they are beginning to shift toward sex and racial equality. However, the shift and changes are not occurring quickly enough. Teachers and school library media specialists should make sure that children are provided with a well-rounded and balanced library collection of books. Supplementary reading material should be provided that will counteract the message of the stereotypes. Schools cannot create a non-sexist and non-racist world. They can join in the struggle or continue to thwart it. They can either continue to perpetuate the old roles and relationships between women and men, or they can begin to free girls and boys from the rigid and stunting identities that have been imposed by our culture.

There is a great need for careful selection of children's reading material as well as non-print (audio-visual aids) today.

Another constraint that the writer had encountered while implementing the school district's library media program was monetary. Library budgets were cut, which

worsened the problem, because the library collection of books could not be upgraded to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student population. The success of the school library media program was threatened when the funding was cut.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Sexism in children's literature has been analyzed and discussed in numerous publications. In a study of sexism in children's literature, Dougherty (1987) analyzed "Caldecott Medal and Honor Book Winners" of the 1980s to determine whether these books reflected changes from the traditional in sex characteristics and roles. Additionally, the article explored whether researchers in the 1980s analyzed these books with the same viewpoints as researchers analyzed previous book winners.

Dougherty's examination of Caldecott Medal and Honor Book winners from 1951 through 1975 revealed that male dominance in the number of characters increased greatly, and a Dougherty study for the years 1976-1980 found slightly less male domination. An analysis of the years 1981 through 1985, however, showed a dramatic change toward sex equality in the number of characters in the books.

Dougherty also concluded that viewpoints of both society and researchers researching this subject changed from the early 1970s to the mid 1980s. The conclusion of the article was that it had importance due to the fact that it drew attention "to the need for careful selection when planning to share literature with young development" (p. 398). The author believed that while characters were closer to equality in the 1980s, more equality was needed.

In an analysis of sexism in Newberry Medal Award books from 1977 to 1984, Kinman and Henderson (1985) cited a 1971 study done by the Feminists on Children's Literature which concentrated on 49 Newberry Medal Winners. Of these 49 books, books about boys outnumbered books about girls by 3 to 1. Additionally, these books "contained derogatory comments about and character portrayals of girls and stereotypic behavior" (p. 887).

Kinman and Henderson updated the study in 1984, and read and reviewed each Newberry Medal winner for the years 1977 through 1984. The result of the study was that in the 1977-1984 books, there were 18 female and 12 male main characters, and 18 books presented positive images of females, with only six representing negative images. The study concluded that generally, the authors of these most recent books are writing with contemporary society's

view in mind. However, there were a few exceptions. Kinman and Henderson concluded that: "From this survey it would seem that authors are observing society as it is and evolving stories and characters that fit into it" (p. 888).

In a study of sexism in reading materials (Bordelon, 1985), the author analyzed whether sexism is present in current children's teaching materials. The author cited a 1972 Task Force of the National Organization of Women study in which the committee read and documented 2,760 stories in 134 books from 12 different publishers over a two-year period. The conclusion of this study was that boys and men were present in overwhelmingly larger numbers than girls and women. Specifically, the study found that boy-centered stories outnumbered girl-centered stories 5 to 2, adult male characters outnumbered adult female characters 3 to 1, male biographies outnumbered female biographies 6 to 1; male animal stories outnumbered female animal stories 2 to 1; and male folktales or fantasies outnumbered female folktales or fantasies 4 to 1.

Bordelon (1985) concluded that while the studies might not follow good scientific principles for reliability and validity, much of it can help the classroom teacher since it indicated that comprehension and retention are improved when characters take on novel

sex roles.

In a study of sexism in basal readers (Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987), the authors analyzed basal readers for elementary students, and concluded that prior to 1980, basal readers published contained main characters which were often stereotyped. Female characters were portrayed as teachers, nurses, clerks, stewardesses, and cooks, while males were doctors, science teachers, mayors, ministers, and writers.

In a review of approximately 30 studies dealing with sex-role stereotyping in educational materials, Johnson and Greenbaum (1982) concluded that sexism does exist in educational materials. However, the authors stated that some progress was shown in the equalization of male-female representation, yet the nature of feminine activities had not changed substantially.

In a review of children's literature, Brett (1982) focused on three main aspects: high literary standards, the child as consumer, and issues such as sexism, racism, or ethnic images. Children need assistance in selecting books. Library media specialists are strong influences in the selection of books. They must carefully select book titles and educational media materials on the basis of their literary quality and appeal to children.

Library media specialists must exercise equal care in guiding and influencing students in selecting library books based upon their reading levels, interests, abilities, and developmental needs. Students and books must be brought together. Library media specialists are able to give students the tools that they need to become literate.

In a recent study of children's literature (Minderman, 1990), the author stresses the challenge and importance that teachers face in the process of evaluating and selecting books that will appeal to the student's interest and ability level. The author reviews new fiction and nonfiction titles and offers valuable tips on evaluating, organizing, and utilizing children's literature.

The best children's books published each year (those receiving the Caldecott Medal, Newberry Award, and Honor Award) have been found to be dominated by males. As a group, they are beginning to shift toward sex equality and provide some changing sex-roles. However, the shift and changes are not occurring quickly enough.

In a study of children's reading material (Langerman, 1990), the author summarizes studies that have analyzed the reading preferences of girls and boys and the relationship of those preferences to their reading

ability. For librarians, the selection of good reading material is a difficult process.

Langerman (1990) discusses research about the availability of appealing literature for boys. Librarians must abandon their stereotyped ideas of what is appropriate for boys. They must help boys identify in a non-sexist way, good reading material.

It is essential that librarians build a non-sexist, non-racist, well-balanced library collection of books for both girls and boys.

In an analysis of reading materials, Rupley and Longnion (1982) examined basal reading textbooks. The results indicated that the publishers had reduced sexism in basal reader stories. In the current basals, males were the main characters in 18% of the stories, while females were the main characters in 17% of the stories. Additionally, the occupations of the female main characters increased dramatically. In 1,121 stories evaluated, female main characters portrayed 37 occupations.

The authors had found female main characters portraying only 5 occupation in the 1961-1967 readers and 23 occupations in the 1969-1971 readers. The authors also concluded that more publishers are avoiding sexism problems by creating neutral and neutered main characters, such as a talking tree or animal.

As a library media specialist, the writer has found sex-role stereotyping in children's literature along with racial bias. After reading and critiquing 150 of the most popular children's books in the media center's collection, the writer found sexism present. The writer analyzed the data collected and prepared a percentage chart utilizing the mean results.

The percentages are the following:

1. Male to female characters: Male 75%, Female 25%
2. Females in active roles: 30%
3. Female's biographies: 20%
4. Females as main characters: 23%
5. Female animal stories: 25%
6. Male and female folk/fantasy stories: Males 75%, Females 25%
7. Females in illustrations: 30%
8. Female occupations in rank order:

   Child (most common)

   Mother

   Princess

   Teacher

   Secretary

   Nurse

   Cook

Children are exposed to conventional sex stereotypes long before they learn to read. Attitudes shown by

friends and family, television, and books are among the influences which have already begun the process of socialization. Children's literature has a special place in this process. It is usually presented to children within a context of authority, either in the classroom or by their parents. Through this literature, society states that: "This is what we would like you to be."

Children's literature should reflect a sensitivity to the needs and rights of girls and boys without preference or bias. Stories in any given book should feature girls as well as boys, women as well as men. They should respect the claim of each of us to all traits we regard as human, not assign them arbitrarily according to preconceived notions of sex roles.

Children's literature should not arbitrarily bar women and girls from the rights, privileges, pursuits, and pleasures granted to men and boys, nor deny them abilities and occupations males have dominated until now. In children's literature, there should be girls and mothers solving problems unassisted by boys and fathers; girls earning money and getting recognition in the form of rewards and awards; mothers employed outside the home; independent working women; girls operating machinery and constructing things; girls playing with

boys on equal terms; girls in strenuous physical situations; girls traveling; girls depicted as taller, wiser, stronger or older than boys--randomly, as in the actual world.

Ingenuity, creativity, bravery, perseverance, achievement, adventurousness, curiosity, sportsmanship, generosity, autonomy, self-respect. These traits are the major theme of the great majority of children's literature. Who are the chosen ones who virtually monopolize the leading roles in these tales? The answer is males--young and old. It is very easy to see how children's books discriminate against girls and women.

Animals in books are male for the most part. Elephants, bears, lions, and tigers are males or, as in the Babar books, isolated females are shown in the company of a majority of males. There are some books about female animals and an occasional reference to the female of the species. Cows, obviously, are female, along with hens. Somehow the female animals tend to have derogatory names such as "Petunia the Goose" or "Frances the Badger." While rhinoceros is male, a hippopatamus is female.

Since there are so few females in the picture book world, one would think they would be very busy. However, such is not the case. Little girls in picture books tend

to be passive, though sometimes manipulative. They walk, read, or dream.

As a library media specialist, the writer believes that there is a strong need for careful selection of children's literature read today. A well-balanced, ethnic and gender fair library collection of books is essential to facilitate a library program of excellence.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum:

The current library resources will be improved by making them more balanced in terms of portraying the diversity that exists in our society: specifically the need to portray characters of different gender and diverse ethnic backgrounds in positive roles. There will be a more balanced depiction of characters portrayed as to their intelligence, sensitivity, adventurousness, activity, emotions, passivity, aggressiveness, courage, and ability to cope with situations, etc.

Expected Outcomes

The writer is a strong influence on advising and guiding students in selecting material from a well-rounded collection.

By the end of the implementation period the 30 most recently checked out books by two sixth grade classes will reveal the following:

1. An increase in the number of female (i.e., over the current 10%) and minority female (i.e., over the current 1%) characters depicted in cover illustrations.

2. An increase in the number of female (i.e., over the current 37%) and minority female (i.e., over the current 5%) characters depicted in illustrations inside the books.

3. An increase in the number of minority males (i.e., over the current 1%) and minority females (i.e., over the current 5%) characters depicted as the main focus in illustrations.

4. There will be a more balanced depiction of characters portrayed as to their intelligence, sensitivity, adventurousness, activity, emotions, passivity, aggressiveness, courage, and ability to cope with situations, etc.

5. There will be a balance in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender background.)

Measurement of Outcomes

The State Department of Education Office of Equal Educational Opportunity Checklist for Evaluating Textbooks for gender-fair and ethnic-fair materials was utilized in evaluating the data obtained from the 30 most recently checked out books by two sixth-grade classes. The checklist is a valuable tool that can be utilized by administrators, teachers, librarians, and other interested

members as an assessment intended to stimulate thinking and to elicit other questions. It can also be utilized as the basis for faculty and community dialogue. The checklist has also been utilized at in-service training sessions and faculty meetings.

The writer obtained a $6,000.00 grant from the state to be utilized for the purchase of library books and library audio-visual materials such as videos and filmstrips. The writer was in charge of ordering the materials to upgrade the library collection of books and non-print materials.

A committee was established to select library books and audio-visual materials from the state grant. The writer utilized a multitude of catalogs and received teacher input in the selection of library materials to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student population to create a more balanced library collection of both print and non-print materials.

A "Reading Interest Questionnaire" was conducted with teachers and administrators. The writer was interested in their responses to assist the book selection process.

A questionnaire was conducted with two sixth-grade classes regarding their response to the new books obtained from the state grant. Students also wrote book reports.

"Book Talks" were presented to teachers and students on a daily basis, to introduce the newly acquired library books. Oral interviews were conducted which provided the writer with valuable feedback.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

There was a need to improve the current library resources by making them more balanced in terms of portraying the diversity that exists in our society: specifically the need to portray characters of different gender and diverse ethnic backgrounds in positive roles.

There was a need for the careful selection of children's reading material to create a balanced collection of books portraying diverse ethnic characters in positive roles.

The problem was that there was an insufficient number in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds.)

From reading the literature, the writer was presented with numerous solutions to the problem. There was a great need for careful selection of children's reading material as well as non-print materials. There was also a need for additional resources to finance the acquisition of the required materials. The writer was aware of the availability of state grants for this purpose, but it was not clear that this source of funding would be sufficient. In the

past "Book Fairs" had been used to raise funds. This solution had the advantage of combining the money-raising function with an opportunity to introduce students and staff to available new materials.

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer determined that sex and racial bias could be avoided in the selection of new reading materials by involving a "book selection committee" who would provide regarding the selection of reading material and non-print materials. The writer and the book selection committee would be guided by the principle that textbooks, educational materials, library books, and audio-visual aids should provide a balance in the representation of males and females and should not contain sex role stereotypes. Students should have access to library materials representative of various ethnic and cultural groups, and their contribution to our American heritage.

In evaluating and selecting educational library media, the following criteria were taken into consideration:

1. Educational quality of the content of the book.
2. Author's skills, credentials, and orientation.
3. The record of the publishers.
4. The books met the evaluation standard for the books in the school district. All books must be free of

objectionable bias. Any biased materials could destroy the achievement of the library program objectives.

5. The State Department of Education Office of Equal Educational Opportunity Checklist for Evaluating Textbooks for gender-fair and ethnic-fair materials was utilized to raise the standards of the library media program.

6. Reading materials should be adapted to meet the student's needs. Students should select books that depict successful professional people from their own racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

With respect to the question of financing the necessary acquisitions, the writer determined to pursue both the state grant and the "Book Fair" fundraising options.

In addition, the writer opted to employ several strategies aimed at raising the awareness of staff and students regarding the issue of sex and racial bias, as well as the availability of the new materials. These efforts included a "Multicultural Festival" that coincided with the "Book Fair", and "Booktalks" given on a daily basis during the month of May to introduce students and teachers to the new materials.

Report of Action Taken

The writer obtained a grant of $6,000.00 from the state for the purchase of new reading materials for the media center. Through the purchase of these reading materials, the library collection of books and non-print materials were upgraded providing a balance in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender background).

The current library resources were improved by making them more balanced in terms of portraying the diversity that exists in our society: specifically the need to portray characters of different gender and diverse ethnic backgrounds in positive roles.

An in-service training workshop was provided that alerted staff members to possible biased reading resources. A committee was established to evaluate library books and materials that were in use.

Additional funds were raised from two "Book Fairs," conducted for two weeks in the fall and two weeks in the month of May. The selection of books and materials was excellent and it provided the students with a wonderful opportunity to purchase items. The titles offered were the best titles from all major publishers, including new titles, award-winning selections, and books that excite,

inspire, and teach. The writer has conducted ten "Book Fairs" with this company. The school keeps a 35% profit of the gross sales. The writer has been able to purchase five T.V.V.C.R.s for the school and a library video collection of 95 videos. Also, new books from the "Book Fair" were added to upgrade the library collection of books.

During the month of May, a "Multicultural Festival" coincided with the "Book Fair." The writer co-chaired the committee. It was a huge success. The writer gave booktalks to both teachers and students about recommended multicultural titles to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student population. The media center was an excellent resource for a wealth of information to both teachers and students.

Booktalks were conducted by the writer on a daily basis to introduce students and teachers to the large selection of new library books and non-print materials. The response was very positive. Numerous multicultural books were showcased outside of the main office, where students, teachers, administrators, and parents were able to view.

Two sixth grade classes wrote book reports on the new books that they checked out. They answered a questionnaire. Their responses were favorable. Everyone

was very excited and pleased with the new collection of books that upgraded the media center.

The writer utilized the results of the "Reading Interest Questionnaire" by teachers, to upgrade the professional section of the media center. Professional books were also purchased from the proceeds of the state grant.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem was that there was an insufficient number in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically characters of diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds in the library resources.) Sex and racial bias was avoided in the selection of new reading materials for the library obtained from the proceeds of a state grant. The library collection of books and non-print materials was upgraded by providing a balance in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds.)

Of the 30 most recently checked out books by two sixth grade classes, the following outcomes were achieved:

1. An increase in the number of female (i.e., from 10% to 70%) and minority female (i.e., from 1% to 60%) characters depicted in cover illustrations.

2. An increase in the number of female (i.e., from 37% to 55%) and minority female (i.e., from 5% to 45%) characters depicted in illustrations inside the books.

3. An increase in the number of minority males (i.e., from 1% to 50%) and minority females (i.e., from 5% to 50%) characters depicted as the main focus in illustrations.

4. An increase in the depiction of characters portrayed as to their intelligence, sensitivity, adventurousness, activity, emotions, passivity, aggressiveness, courage, and ability to cope with situations, etc.

5. An increase in the portrayal of diverse characters in positive roles (specifically, characters of diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds.)

Students now have a new large collection of titles to choose from in the media center. The best educational media was selected to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse students that utilize the media center.

Discussion

As an educational media specialist, the writer is a cultural mediator and agent of change. There was a need to improve the quality of the library media curriculum by making it more balanced and culturally sensitive to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student population.

The outcomes of this practicum were met with significant improvement of library resources. Hopefully, the new library media resources will contribute to

students's self-esteem and cultural development. Students now have access to a wealth of valuable information in the media center, that will help them become successful adults.

Although the role of particular ethnic groups in American society has been neglected for many years in American schools, publishers today have made tremendous strides in continuing to produce positive, beautiful reading materials about these various ethnic groups.

The new library books and non-print materials were videotaped in the media center. Teachers and students previewed the books before they went into circulation. Their responses were very positive and favorable! They loved the new collection of titles and non-print materials. They couldn't wait to utilize the materials!

The practicum has provided students with a large collection of works in which women and minority group members are presented positively. The availability of such works is important for students in any school. It is especially important for the particular students who use this media center, because these students are themselves an ethnically diverse group. The characters

presented in the new titles will provide positive role models for students, quite possibly resulting in the development of important values and the elevation of students' levels of aspiration. The materials may also foster students' awareness of cultural diversity, promoting mutual respect and tolerance. Moreover, it is possible that the availability of these materials will result in the reduction of sexist attitudes among both female and male students.

Recommendations

It is necessary to work continuously to improve the collection of books and materials at the media center. Many new works are published each year that depict women and minority group members in positive roles, so a collection can become out of date quickly. Additional outside funding must be sought to provide the resources necessary to continue this work.

In order to document the worth of these efforts, it is recommended that research be carried to determine the effect of such acquisitions on the attitudes of students and on their future aspirations. Hard data pertinent to these issues could enhance the efforts to fund further acquisitions.

Dissemination

The writer will distribute a list of recommended books and materials to all of the media centers throughout the school district. This will assist other media specialists when they order books and materials in June for the following year. This networking with other media specialists will enhance their new library collections of titles and non-print materials also.

Recommended book lists will be distributed to the teachers in the writer's work setting to assist them in guiding and influencing their students in selecting library books based upon their reading levels, interests, abilities, and developmental needs.

Students and books must be brought together. As a library media specialist, the writer is able to give students the tools that they need to become literate. Reading is basic to our lives. A child's whole future may depend on it.

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APPENDIX A

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CHECKLIST

State , Department of Education
Office of Equal Educational Opportunity

CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS

READERS

	MALE		FEMALE	
	WHITE	MINORITY	WHITE	MINORITY
A. ILLUSTRATIONS				
1. Who are on the front/back cover?				
2. How many pictures are there of?				
3. Who is the main focus of the picture?				
4. How many children are?				
5. How many of the older children are?				
6. How many adults are				
7. How many are depicted as parents?				
8. How many children/adults are?				
(a) crying, frightened, or passive?				
(b) angry, adventurous, active?				
(c) depicted as stupid, selfish, the butt of a joke?				
(d) demeaned?				
9. How many families have a single parent as head?				

	MALE	
	WHITE	MINORITY
10. How many occupations/activities are allotted to men?		

	FEMALE	
	WHITE	MINORITY
11. How many occupations/activities are allotted to women?		

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B. TEXT

1. Of the main character:
   (a) how many children are?
   (b) how many adults are?
   (c) how many children/adults are involved in household tasks?
   (d) how many children/adults are caring for others?
2. Who are the older children?
3. In adventure stories, how many of the main characters are?
4. In love stories, how many of the main characters are?
5. How many children/adults are depicted as:
   (a) expressing emotion?
   (b) timid or frightened?
   (c) dependent upon others?
   (d) independent?
   (e) intelligent or active?
   (f) making decisions?
6. How many adults are depicted in a parental role?
7. How many stories include characters who are:
   (a) stupid?
   (b) nasty/unkind to others?
   (c) the butt of a joke?
   (d) demeaned?
9. In how many occupations (excluding parenthood) are adults depicted?

MALE		FEMALE	
WHITE	MINORITY	WHITE	MINORITY

APPENDIX B

TEACHER READING INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Faculty:

Please complete this questionnaire regarding reading interests. Thank you for your time and cooperation with this matter. (Please place this in my mailbox or the media center.) I appreciate your input.

Miss Donna Saykanic

Name: _____

Reading Interests

1. If you could read about anything, what would you read about? _____

_____

2. What part of the newspaper do you like to read?

_____news stories _____ editorials

_____sports _____advertisements

_____comics _____ Dear Abby, Ann Landers

3. What magazines do you like to read? _____

_____

4. If you bought a paperback novel, what would it be about? _____

_____

5. What is the best book you have ever read? _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

STUDENT BOOK REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____

Author_____

Title_____

What did you enjoy most about this book?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What did you like least about this book?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____